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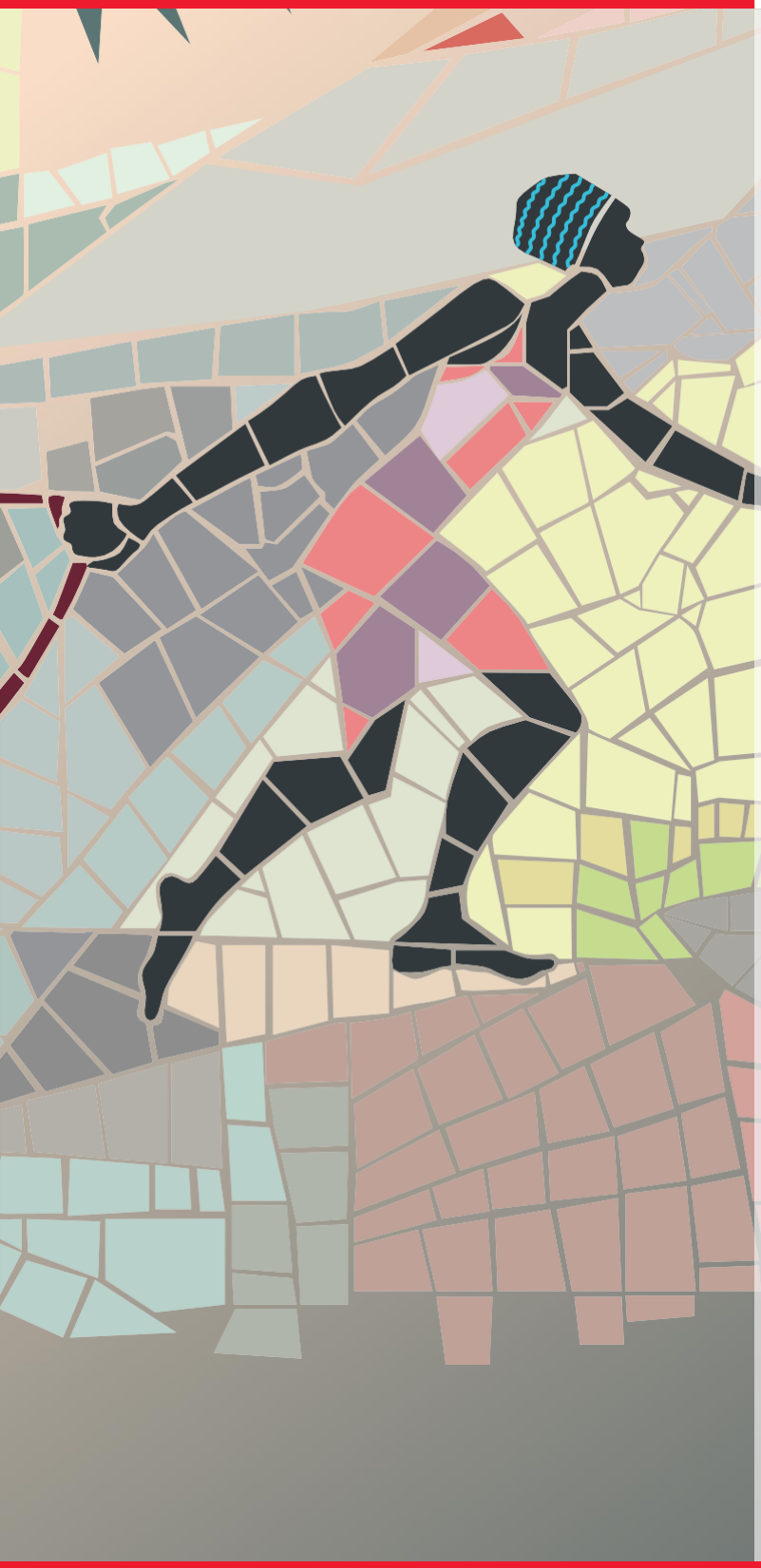

A Critical Review of Evidence from Ex-Combatant Reintegration Programs

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Abstract

Determining the criteria that have contributed to the success or failure of a Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program has led to the publication of countless documents on lessons learned, new pathways, and revised theories. The large number of DDR reports is justified, considering the high value that a successful program would yield: DDR is the largest intervention in nearly all of the United Nations' ongoing large-scale peacekeeping missions tasked with restoring social capital and promoting long-term peace. However, the argument also holds true in reverse: the post-conflict era risks renewed war if demobilized combatants are not properly reintegrated into society. Despite numerous lessons learned publications, reintegration programs seem to run into the same obstacles in every new context, resulting in badly implemented plans and at best suboptimal results. The constant evaluation and negative assessments suggest that we have not learned our DDR lessons; so we repeat mistakes of the past, run into unforeseen problems in the implementation phase, and face unexpected results that defy explanation.

This paper critically reviews the conceptual literature on DDR/DDRRR (Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration and Resettlement) as well as practitioner/donor publications on DDR approaches and lessons learned. The review focuses mainly on programs in Africa's Great Lakes Region, specifically the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi, South Sudan, Uganda, and the Central African Republic (CAR). Reviewing a large number of works between 1990 and 2017, the paper draws conclusions on the conditions that contribute to endemic violence in the post-conflict period and the factors that make social repair possible among and within communities that have undergone acute social stress. It shows the ways in which standardized peacebuilding approaches to return within DDR programs are irrelevant to people on the ground that negotiate conflict realities, and explains how ex-combatant returnees affect local governance structures. In the end, it considers the possibility of reintegration programs dealing with ex-combatants in conflicts characterized by violent extremism.

Introduction

Having emerged in the early post-Cold War period as an element of UN-sponsored peacekeeping missions, Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) is a relatively recent program in post-conflict reconstruction. By 1998, the shift from "peacekeeping" to "peacebuilding" had also heralded the inclusion of ex-combatant reintegration in the peace building process (UN 1998). The first DDR missions in Namibia and Cambodia had no clear template of action, doctrine, or standards, and were coordinated based on objectives rather than planned sequences of action. Almost three decades since the first DDR mission in Namibia (UNTAG), DDR missions are regularly expected to show concrete and durable achievements, while their effectiveness is still unknown or questionable (Muggah 2005).

Part of the obscurity of success or failure relates to the ever-increasing expectations attributed to DDR programs and the increasingly complex conflict settings in which they are deployed. The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO 1999: 5-15) defines reintegration as "assistance measures provided to former combatants that would increase the potential for their and their families'

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economic and social reintegration into civil society." In 2006, DPKO published the "Integrated Demobilization, Disarmament, and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS), creating a substantive base for Member States to engage with and support DDR programs. The 2006 report emphasized that both individuals and communities (residents, returnees, former combatants, and internally displaced persons) must be regarded as stakeholders in reintegration efforts. In the contemporary literature, ex-combatant reintegration goals include two types of transformation (Torjesen 2013). In the first type, ex-combatants change from combatant to civilian (identity transformation). In the second, they stop employing violent means and get involved in social, political, and economic activities sanctioned by the community (behavioural transformation). In social terms, ex-combatants increase their communication with the community and reduce their contact with and reliance on their former militia network. In political terms, ex-combatants participate at the local, regional, or national level, either passively by voting, or actively by advocating or representing a group. In economic terms, ex-combatants gain long-term formal or informal employment (Torjesen 2013, 4).

Determining the criteria that contribute to the success or failure of a DDR program has preoccupied scholars of civil conflict as well as practitioners of peace operations. The great deal of DDR theories and reports is justified, considering the high value a successful program would yield: DDR is the largest intervention in nearly all of the United Nation's ongoing large-scale peacekeeping missions and is tasked with restoring public security, law, and order (Berdal and Ucko 2013). A well-planned and flexible reintegration process is known to restore social capital and promote the viability of long-term peace locally, nationally, and internationally (Berdal 1996; Colletta, Kostner and Wiederhofer 1996a). The argument also holds true in reverse: war-torn countries with demobilized combatants run the risk of returning to war if former combatants are not provided with vocational skills, placed into employment, and reintegrated successfully (Collier 1994; Kingma 1997).

Evaluations of the effectiveness and relevance of DDR programs have suffered from methodological dilemmas – the shortage of baseline data has made researchers resort to qualitative or limited, localized quantitative evidence of success or failure in individual dimensions of each program. The few existing large-N studies have provided conclusions at times contrary to the strengths and weaknesses identified in routine internal reports for each program (Molloy 2008). For instance, Humphreys and Weinstein (2004) employ a large-N survey of ex-combatants engaged in the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL, 2001-2005), concluding that participation in the DDR program did not significantly contribute to ex-combatant reintegration. This is while UNAMSIL is considered a success case among DDR programs amongst practitioners. When Pugel (2007) used the same methodology to study the DDR process in Liberia (UNMIL, 2003-2006), the results were closer to Humphreys and Weinstein's evaluation of the program that it was inefficient. The discrepancy between the results of quantitative studies and the conclusions of case field reports can be partially explained by the fact that large-N studies (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004; Pugel 2007; Gilligan, Mvukiyehe, and Samii 2013) treat ex-combatants as independent agents, rather than parts of an armed organization. They ignore the critical role played by social networks in determining post-war outcomes at the organizational and regional levels (Daly 2016).

Another reason for the discrepancy in findings could be the reliance on single-case studies, and the failure in practitioner reporting to integrate a theoretical framework for studying ex-combatant reintegration (Torjesen 2013). A substantial correlation between DDR participation and socio-political improvement in ex-combatant livelihood does not make a strong case for reintegration assistance programs (Gilligan, Mvukiyehe, and Samii 2012). The success of reintegration programs goes beyond individual-level achievements. Changing the unit of analysis by studying communities instead of individuals could bridge the gap between the contrasting findings. It is, however, difficult to construct metrics of success for reintegration at the community level, considering the intricacy and specificity of community-level reintegration. Finally, DDR evaluations and formal assessments are often conducted soon after the process ends, as they lack the capacity and funding to take a longer view and assess if those

demobilised subsequently remained demobilised.

Purpose of the Study

DDR programs are initiated primarily to reduce the risk of conflict recurrence. However, the DDR experience in Central Africa has yielded mixed results, with initiatives only partially implemented and often failing at achieving program objectives. This paper critically reviews the conceptual literature on DDR/DDRRR (Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration and Resettlement) as well as the practitioner/donor publications on DDR approaches and lessons learned, with a focus on reintegration. The review draws on experiences in Africa's Great Lakes Region, specifically the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi, South Sudan, Uganda, and the Central African Republic (CAR). It seeks to find answers to five thematic questions, addressing both conceptual and practical challenges of reintegration:

(1) What are the conditions under which mutuality is simply not possible and violence becomes endemic and seemingly inescapable?

(2) What are the conditions under which conflict-affected societies are able to move on peacefully and/or live productively in situations of acute social stress? What are the elements that make social repair possible in situations characterized by staggering levels of upheaval and suffering?

(3) Are standardized peacebuilding approaches to return within DDR programs relevant to people on the ground that negotiate conflict realities and their legacies on a daily basis?

(4) How do ex-combatant returnees affect local governance structures? How do they interact with international peacebuilding actors?

(5) Can DDR programs, as currently conceptualized and planned, address the reintegration of ex-combatants in conflicts characterized by violent extremism?

Methodology

The reviewed works in this paper are drawn from a systematic literature review, designed to assess the literature without bias, by defining, assessing, and synthesizing the available evidence on an issue (Gough et al. 2012; Mallett et al. 2012; Hagen-Zanker and Mallett 2013). First, we identified five main sets of research questions, presented above. We limited our review to works on Africa's Great Lakes Region, specifically the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi, South Sudan, Uganda, and the Central African Republic (CAR) and focused on assessments of formal programs. The theoretical component of the review, however, is not region specific, and draws from works on all DDR initiatives. We mainly focused on literature in English, with the majority of the works published between 1990 and 2017. We excluded most of the literature on Security Sector Reform and gender-specific works, considering the focus of the five research questions. Thereafter, using the research questions, we identified the following search strings:

- "Reintegration and postconflict"
- "Reintegration and endemic violence"

- "Reintegration and social repair"
- "Social repair and post-conflict"
- "DDR and local governance"
- "DDR and international peacebuilding"
- "DDR and Counter Violent Extremism"

The search strings were entered into four widely used social science databases- JSTOR, Google Scholar, World Cat, and SAGE. We then did a "snowball search," drawing literature from the bibliographies of key resources. We also consulted a number of DDR experts for recommendations. After a review of all the works collected through the above-mentioned steps, we provided answers to the formulated research questions in the five sections below. Each section concludes with a number of principal takeaways, reflecting the implications of that section's findings. We then conducted interviews with two DDR officials at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, who provided some useful feedback on the implications of our findings. The following sections follow the sequence of the five research questions presented above.

The literature review does not attend to the issues of civilian return, such as the resettlement of refugees or internally displaced persons, and solely handles the case of ex-combatant return and reintegration.[2] It also does not provide a full, substantive analysis of DDR in each of the specific countries in the Great Lakes Region, nor of the institutions and programs involved in the disarmament phase. This review focuses on works on adult reintegration and is largely indifferent to gender- and age-specific issues.

Conditions under which Violence becomes Endemic

There are two sides to the coin of successful reintegration: conflict-affected societies have to accept members of former rebel groups as new members of the community while the rebels must choose not to remilitarize and live peacefully within their communities. Since 1991, despite ongoing DDR programs, many rebel groups have remilitarized, restarting civil conflict and undermining peace. Three existing frameworks explain why demobilized rebels pick up arms after a peace agreement has been signed. First, are the frameworks based on the "greed and grievance" literature on civil war onset, originally proposed by Collier and Hoeffler (2004). These assume that the same factors explaining rebel mobilization are also at play when rebels remobilize. Poverty, rough terrain, weak state capacity, plunderable natural resources, and large, sparsely distributed populations (Blattman and Miguel 2010; Hegre and Sambanis 2006) are favourable conditions for rebel remilitarization, while the absence of these conditions would ensure peace.

The logic underlying the greed and grievance theory can itself lead to further violence when states respond to threats of remilitarization with financial incentives, usually in cash or in the form of bonuses, to demobilized combatants. Once the state begins to cash-respond to every threat of remilitarization or mutiny, a cycle of *rent-seeking rebellions* begins: recurrent mutinies against army commanders or local political leaders by armed constituents seeking a larger share of the resources dispensed by the government (de Waal 2014; 2017). In South Sudan in recent years, cycles of violence have ended with a deal in which the rebel leader obtains a government or army post and his followers are enrolled in the SPLA. The cash-response can support a pattern of rent-seeking rebellions. De Waal highlights that long established ethnic patronage networks can be mobilised to violence in order to seek rents (de Waal 2014). However, the South Sudanese example also shows that historic alliances and institutionally embedded grievances are often just as important during these mobilisations. While rent-seeking may reshape coalitions and strategies, the underlying reason that combatants agree to mobilise is rarely just based on

[2] For a review of literature on return and reintegration of non-combatants, see Jolien Tegenbos & Koen Vlassenroot, "The Figure of the Returnee: Home to the 'Evidence' on Cycles of Violence, Displacement and Return," CRG University of Ghent, February 2018.

rent (Johnson 2014, Pendle 2018).

Second, frameworks based on rational-choice theory suggest that the costliness of war and the unlikelihood of winning solely through force would prompt both the rebels and the government to opt for peace (Fearon 2004; Powell, 2012). To the contrary, if each actor cannot credibly commit to the terms of the peace agreement, peace would be elusive. The security dilemma, for instance, often leads to partial demobilization and ultimately to remobilization. In DRC, a third national DDR program was implemented in 2015 as a response to remilitarized combatants who had either joined local defence forces or returned to fighting for the *Mouvement du 23-mars* (M23, March 23 Movement) rebel group (Vogel and Musamba 2016). The previous two DDR programs had mixed results. Some armed groups participated in DDR programs and demobilized, others self-demobilized, and many did not demobilize, lacking the assurance that the national defence forces would provide security to their communities and refrain from military operations against demobilized combatants. Vogel and Musamba (2016) argue that the DDR III program, in its current formulation, is bound to follow the fate of the previous two programs, considering both the distrust of DDR programs accumulated over the years and the lack of trust in the national army to ensure security.

While these two are the dominant frameworks in the literature, there are cases of remilitarization that defy the logic of the two frameworks. A third framework makes the likelihood of remilitarization contingent upon the organizational structure of the armed group: the geographic recruitment pattern of armed organizations explains the group's choice to resume violence after demobilizing (Daly 2016). Armed groups that only include local recruits manage to maintain a cohesive network in the post-conflict phase and are able to successfully renegotiate bargains and demilitarize. On the contrary, rebel organizations that include non-local groups disperse away from the zone of employment after demobilizing. This results in network decay, information problems, and unsuccessful bargain renegotiations. In such organizations, local groups remilitarize in a powerful fashion while the non-local units struggle to rebuild that capacity.

A few studies have characterized DDR programs in Uganda (Colletta, Kostner and Wiederhofer 1996a; World Bank 2013) and South Africa (Dzinesa 2017) as success stories, especially in the sense of former rebels integrating into a national army. Others have shown that this integration was far from universal, and in Uganda, the process was particularly problematic (Borzello 2009; Mutengesa 2013). An early study from 1997 (Kingma) contended that both programs unified groups before demobilization. This was because the financial costs of integrating armed groups into a large new national force, was deemed lower than the social and political costs of an expedited demobilization. However, in general, remobilization occurs quite frequently, partly because DDR arrangements are rarely based on a consensus among all parties, but are part of an arrangement promoted by a state with international support. Many processes end up being less about demobilisation, and more about rearranging militarised factions.

While the above three frameworks offer an explanation for why rebel groups remilitarize, a rebel group's return to arms is not the only cause of endemic violence. Ex-combatants can be both protagonists and victims of post-war insecurity. Studying the DDR processes in Namibia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, McMullin (2013, 237) concludes that security challenges during the DDR process were often not ex-combatant return to war or ex-combatant criminality and banditry. In each of the four countries, violence erupted because of violent land disputes and organized crime centred on arms and drugs. The violence perpetrated by deactivated police, political elites, merchants, and intermediaries was greater in scale and scope than acts involving ex-combatants. McMullin (2013) warns that every case of riot or protest should not be taken as a signal of return to arms, but as a sign of dissatisfaction taking the form of politically engaged demands for government entitlements. Post-conflict insecurity should be studied in detail, avoiding an association of every form of post-conflict violence with ex-combatant grievances or greed for renewed war.

Studying conflicts in detail requires an understanding of motives and actor configuration driving renewed conflict. For instance, the 2012 revival of low-intensity war in Mozambique 22 years after what is considered a successful DDR program, should not be attributed merely to the remobilization of Mozambican National Resistance/*Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (Renamo) forces (Wiegink 2015). Rather, among the new Renamo forces are young recruits challenging the government of President Filipe Jacinto Nyusi. The new surge of conflict in Mozambique is then, both the result of an incomplete reintegration of ex-combatants and a reflection of the contemporary political landscape, marked by the dominance of the ruling Mozambique Liberation Front/*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Frelimo) in both political and administrative positions (Vhumbunu 2017; Wiegink 2015).

The failure to reach a social contract between the government and the people also fuels cycles of violence. The Central African Republic (CAR) is an exemplary case of failed peacebuilding programs. By 2015, the UN, the European Union, and a Security Council authorized deployment by France had tried their hand at peacekeeping missions, with nearly 12,000 international troops stationed in the small central African nation with a national army of 8,000 soldiers (Carayannis and Lombard 2015). Instead of meeting the conflict with a "sustained *political* commitment" to combat impunity and to redistribute political and economic power, the peacekeeping missions worked to restore the army, hoping create a state of normalcy (Carayannis and Lombard 2015: 326). The renewed conflict has been due every time to the absence of state services, with the army having been a source of predation and insecurity in the decades before and after independence from France.

In cases like CAR, where the state never held the monopoly of violence and is not likely to hold it in the near future, reintegration efforts within the DDR framework only fuel grievances (Carayannis and Lombard 2015). The 2012 DDR Steering Committee, composed of members of the government, rebel groups, and the international community, stalled in taking the key political decisions that would commit the government to a different political and economic distribution than what had been in place since independence. In the absence of political action, the promise of pay-offs ballooned the number of combatant fighters, while unmet expectations added to their grievances. By the time the initial list of combatants was prepared for the DDR program, the People's Army for the Restoration of Democracy (APRD) managed to increase its numbers from about 1,000 to 6,000 fighters, promising material rewards from the DDR program (Carayannis and Lombard 2015). The negotiations stalled - owed partly to a lack of genuine will on the part of the CAR government to address the rebel group grievances. The government has instead eyed the DDR program as a means of neutralizing the rebels. Without a clear peace deal between the conflicting parties, the DDR program has in effect exacerbated the conflict, with both rebels and the government waiting for the program to issue results it is not designed to produce.[3]

Studying ex-combatant motivation in cases of a resurgence in violence in the post-conflict setting is also important for gauging the degree of a DDR program's success. Resurgence of conflict is not always the result of failed reintegration, but of the state's failure to deliver on its promises of political and economic inclusivity. A state's political will at times manifests itself in excluding a certain population from sections of the economy. In such cases, the best DDR programs cannot sustain peace in the long run, nor can they ensure ex-combatant reintegration in the period immediately following the cessation of violence. In eastern DRC, for instance, the current presence of over 100 armed groups can be attributed not only to the Congolese state's refusal to negotiate with some armed groups, but also to the non-inclusive political institutions that cause economic grievances, especially with regard to land ownership and resource extraction. These political and economic grievances feed cycles of conflict in DRC.[4]

Takeaways: The role of the state in curbing endemic violence cannot be overemphasized. State

[3] Interview with DDR officials at UN Headquarters in New York, June 2017.

[4] Insights on the ongoing DDR program in the DRC were collected through interviews in June 2017 with officials at the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Section, Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), United Nations Headquarters, New York.

fragility leads to new economic grievances, in addition to fuelling a security dilemma that discourages ex-combatants from disarming or taking part fully in the reintegration program. In cases where state governance has largely been absent outside capital cities, it is unreasonable to assume that the state can ensure the security of ex-combatants and their receiving communities. The international community should provide conditional financial support for the state in the post-conflict phase, making sure salaries of government employees, especially in the security sector, are paid for. Endemic violence in post-conflicts setting is mainly caused by the lack of political will on the part of state authorities to negotiate a peace deal or commit to one. With unaddressed political grievances and a delegitimized government in the eyes of rebels, no amount of resources, expertise, or finances in DDR missions can ensure peace, especially not in the long term.

Conditions for Peaceful Coexistence in Conflict-Affected Societies

The "Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards" (IDDRS), developed by a UN inter-agency working group in 2005 to improve coordination between UN agencies, describes reintegration as a "social and economic process with an open time frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. It is part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility, and often necessitates long-term external assistance." On an individual level, reintegration by way of DDR is meant to increase the potential for the economic and social reintegration of both ex-combatants and their families (Berdal 1996).[5] Nevertheless, the overlapping R's of the DDRRRR programs (Reinsertion, Reintegration, Rehabilitation, and Resettlement) have the collective, long-term objective of enhancing economic and human development and fostering political stability, security, and peace (Nübler 1997, 3). In order to understand the conditions under which conflict-affected societies are able to move on peacefully and/or live productively in situations of acute social stress, first we have to unearth the factors that contribute to reducing positive attitudes, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Identifying these elements would point towards strategies for eliminating or reducing their negative effects.

The first element that must be overcome is the deep-seated distrust of the warring party and its members, which is often the result of an acquired identity that is based centrally on negating the other during conflict (Kelman 2008). Undoing the distrust would require the conflicting parties to undergo a collective identity change in the reconciliation process in which each party accepts the other's identity without regarding it as a negation of one's own (Kelman 2008). For this to happen in the post conflict setting, the *remainees*, for instance, have to acknowledge the validity and legitimacy of the others' narrative. The next step is accepting collective responsibility for past wrongdoings. This involves expressions of collective guilt and empathy for members of the other group (Noor et al. 2002). In contrast, relying on narratives of victimhood in one's own group encourages group members to display an unwillingness to accept collective responsibility and a reluctance to eschew empathy for members of the other group (Cehajic, Brown, and Gonzalez 2009).

Many communities use traditional cleansing rituals in an effort to remove the stigma of the ex-combatant (Stovel 2008; Granjo 2007; Sriram and Herman 2009), as well as to recreate social harmony, ensuring the basic functioning of meaningful and productive social and economic relations (Porter 2017). However, critical assessments of the former have raised serious concerns about how effective these rituals are in practice, and how they tend to become an aspect of gendered hierarchies, linked to ethno-justice (Branch 2014). Porter's work on social harmony (2017) also highlights consequences for abused people,

[5] During the last few decades, psychosocial support (PSS) has become a frequent component of assistance programmes in ongoing and post-conflict contexts. For a detailed study, refer to Costanza Torre, "Psychosocial Support (PSS) in War-affected Countries: A Literature Review." London School of Economics and Political Science, January 2018.

including raped women who have no option other than to continue living in the vicinity of their rapists.

In other instances, village councils hold meetings where tribal leaders or village elders vouch for returnees. Reintegration programs in Northern Uganda have sometimes used purported (sometimes recently appointed) traditional leaders, chiefs, elders and clan leaders to promote the reintegration of former Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) combatants. A range of D, D, R & R activities have taken place in Uganda, which do not fit within a classic model or within a single DDR program, making it difficult to offer an evaluation of the activities as a whole (Finnegan and Flew 2008). Fighting the stigmatization associated with ex-combatants, political elites discouraged the community from using terms like "returnees," "formerly abducted children," and "child mothers" (Omach 2016). Ex-combatants have gone through welcoming, cleansing, forgiveness seeking, and reconciliation rituals, some of which were funded by international donors, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Cleansing ceremonies can be problematic, however, when applied erratically. Only 29 per cent of 886 former abductees surveyed in Northern Uganda had participated in any form of ritual (Allen and Schomerus 2006). In addition, the Acholi rituals used in Northern Uganda have changed over the many years of conflict with the LRA: some have been weakened and adapted and some have been shunned by Christian rehabilitation centers (Borzello 2007). Others have been a product of lobbying against criminal justice measures by activists and have limited meaning for the purported beneficiaries (Allen 2005, 2006; Allen and Vlassenroot 2010). Inconsistent approaches to accountability among ex-combatants demobilizing at different time periods, or returning from displacement camps, can produce major discord and diminish trust in the existence and effectiveness of local rituals for all returning ex-combatants. While many former ways of responding to wrongdoing have decayed, a new system has not been firmly established, giving rise to greater prominence of newer actors, such as Local Councilors, Christian churches and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Porter 2012). Macdonald (2017) points to the tension between normative transitional justice ideals of justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation and the pragmatic contingencies that shape whether or not post-conflict co-existence between victims, perpetrators and victim-perpetrators is possible. Social exclusion is still a widespread problem in northern Uganda, with many former combatants living in vulnerable conditions, despite the claims of some analysts and activists that social rejection is rare because of strong community relations (Corbin 2008).

At the same time, cleansing rituals are mainly directed at adult reporters (ex-combatants) and children mostly play a passive role in them, undermining reintegration (Akello, Richters, and Reis 2006; Amone-P'Olak 2007; Blattman and Lundberg 2007; Stark, Boothby, and Ager 2009). Formerly recruited young women and girls also experienced social isolation after returning to their communities despite having gone through traditional rituals, causing internal displacement of child mothers away from their communities (Akello 2013; Porter 2012).

Wartime bonds formed among combatants are a second factor to consider. These social and emotional bonds are strong enough for fighters to be willing to sacrifice their lives for one another in the name of brotherhood. Interviews with 170 male Libyans who took part in the revolutionary war in 2011 show that some members of groups developed a "visceral, family-like sense of unity" or "identity fusion" with their group (Whitehouse, McQuinn, Buhrmester, and Swann 2014). The Libyan's estimated rate of fusion with one's battalion (97%) and other battalions (96%) stands at a stark contrast to a population's peacetime rates of fusion with its nation (41% with Spain, for instance). More relevantly, only 1% of the Libyan revolutionaries indicated a fusion with ordinary Libyans who supported the revolution but did not join any battalions.

LRA abductees have reported almost the same threats after escaping as during the first period of transition: they have to fear the LRA, the Ugandan military and civilians. Establishing themselves as civilians, the returned soldiers are stripped of their former identity for a second time, after they have

been forced with a new identity as members of the rebel group. They experience the destruction of the "moral space" that provided the framework for their actions as soldiers (Mergelsberg 2012, 170). For DDR scholars, these results point to the dual-directionality of acceptance in the community. Not only should the *remainees* be prepared to receive ex-combatants and their families, but also the sustainability of peace is contingent upon changes in ex-combatant attitudes towards *remainees*.

In a study of 1,000 ex-combatants in Sierra Leone, Humphreys and Weinstein (2007) construct four variables to measure reintegration: being delinked, employed, confident in the peace agreement, and not wanting to challenge the government with military means. Their work is considered an exemplary large-N study, proving that participation in DDR programs does not improve ex-combatant reintegration. Beyond their conclusion, however, their findings also shed light on the relationship between the four measures of reintegration: "Reintegration on one dimension is typically not a good predictor of reintegration on another dimension" (Humphreys and Weinstein 2007, 543). The factors - delinking, finding employment, having confidence in the peace agreement, and not intending to militarily challenge the government - do not correlate with one another. Being delinked from the war factions, for instance, shows a negative correlation with being employed and the confidence level an ex-combatant expresses in the democratic system. While 14% of former Revolutionary United Front (RUF) combatants reported not having found acceptance among their families and communities, the measure shows little correlation with them being delinked from their former war factions. Thus, for analysis purposes, measuring the degree to which ex-combatants are delinked does not determine success in other areas of reintegration. For policy purposes, the findings raise further doubts on the utility of disconnecting ex-combatants from their warring factions in order to ensure successful reintegration.

A third factor is poverty: failing to reintegrate ex-combatants economically directs ex-combatants towards illicit economies or towards remobilizing against the state to mitigate their economic grievances. Finding employment consistent with DDR job training significantly improves how ex-combatants view the DDR program (Phayal, Khadka, and Thyne 2015). Economic reintegration often starts with a reinsertion phase, where ex-combatants receive cash, vocational training, or other skills to help them find jobs. The cash component of the reinsertion phase can be an effective tool if it is part of the overall insertion package and is not a lump-sum payment (Knight and Özerdem 2004).

Drawing on experiences of seven DDR programs on the African continent, Knight (2008) argues that providing large benefits to ex-combatants during the reinsertion phase can cause major resentment among the civilian population or among the soldiers remaining in the army. The high payments to ex-combatants caused protests and even mutinies in FADM, the new Mozambican army established in 1994 (Kingma 1997). These cases highlight the benefits in-kind assistance or other material support bring to the community at large. Community resentment towards assistance given to ex-combatants is not a given, and reported feelings of resentment, if they exist, are often the result of failure of reconstruction (McMullin 2013). This is mainly because transition in DDR programs from targeted to non-targeted support to communities is rarely seen in practice. The "cash for work" schemes are also difficult to implement in places with weak infrastructural projects within the reintegration camps and a high unemployment rate among other community members, such as in the Acholi region of Northern Uganda (Finnegan and Flew 2008).

Like cash payments, gaining vocational skills does not benefit ex-combatants unless there is sufficient demand and absorptive capacity in the economy for the acquired skills (Maclay and Özerdem 2010). In practice, however, the training programs are carried out in only half of the time required to train a civilian in peacetime (Munive 2014). Vocational training persists as part of reintegration programs only because donors and implementing actors are willing to fund it as an activity with little risk of failure, with the capacity for clear results that can be announced in numbers (McMullin 2013). To remedy the excess of labour, Özerdem (2015) suggests providing linkages between the reintegration of Taliban members in Afghanistan and the development challenges of the country. Employment-creating programs

can include establishing reconstruction companies, thus providing employment opportunities for trained ex-combatants. In addition, training ex-combatants as search-and-rescue personnel can strengthen Afghanistan's disaster preparedness and response. Other sustainable employment programs include training ex-combatants in re-forestation and other environmental protection work, as well as mobilizing receiving communities to participate in self-sufficiency agriculture programs, allowing ex-Taliban members to restart farming.

Involving the community also adds to the legitimacy of the reintegration process, with both *remainees* and ex-combatants claiming ownership of the process. The International Labor Organization (ILO) suggests making contracting systems transparent and local. The national government and donors should agree not to contract to foreign companies and to provide the private sector and community associations with a transparent contracting system (ILO 2010, 31). The contracts should address local obligations, rights, and benefits as a step towards local capacity building, participation, and ownership, as well as stimulating the local economy. Since reintegration takes place in communities, ILO emphasizes the importance of decentralizing early on in the process and building capacities at the local level. The organization's Rapid Employment Impact Projects (REIPs) can be implemented once a ceasefire is in place and before disarmament begins. The projects include immediate reconstruction of small infrastructure and income-generating activities identified by the local community based on their own needs. Activities can include debris and garbage removal, sign painting, routine maintenance, etc. Former fighters in Eritrea were engaged in reforestation, soil conservation, and the rehabilitation of roads, bridges, dams, schools, and clinics (Kingma 1997).

While a set of socio-economic and psychological factors contribute to long-term social repair, ex-combatants can take advantage of the short-lived opportunities in the immediate aftermath of the peace process through immediate organized actions. In Rwanda, for instance, following the human disaster of 1994, decomposing bodies floating in Lake Victoria posed a high health hazard for the surrounding communities. Following a request from the German Ambassador, ex-combatants collected the floating bodies, exhumed those buried in shallow graves near the water level or on shore, and transferred them to higher ground (Colletta, Kostner and Wiederhofer 1996). Operation Burial demonstrates how easily ex-combatants can be mobilized and organized for emergency operations: "Although such short-term employment may create income, veterans regard their participation as a contribution toward fostering national development and helping communities" (Colletta, Kostner and Wiederhofer 1996). It is important to provide receiving communities access to social benefits early on, such as schools, health centres, roads, bridges, etc. Such early action "can mitigate community tension, while delivering tangible results and improving the credibility of UN agencies" (ILO 2010, 47).

Takeaways: Economic grievances, animosity-based identity formation, and the resilience of wartime bonds are three of the most prohibitive factors in social repair. In dealing with each of these factors, community-based reintegration programs are the only means to achieving peaceful coexistence in conflict-affected societies. Not only should the remainees be prepared to receive ex-combatants and their families, but the sustainability of peace is contingent upon changes in ex-combatant attitudes towards the remainees. Local initiatives in rite of passage ceremonies along with national mechanisms of serving justice against perpetrators of violence play a crucial role in generating a collective identity change that would lessen the deep-seated distrust picked up during the conflict. Cash payments should be reduced to the minimum and in the immediate post-conflict phase, ex-combatants should be employed in activities that serve the community.

Standardized Peacebuilding Approaches to Return: Questioning the Assumptions

Standard peacebuilding approaches envision ex-combatants as a batch of disarmed civilians returning home to a safe environment. Disarmament is a first common practice in DDR programs. A study of 122 ex-combatants in South Sudan found that concerns with security, political instability, and availability of

firearms significantly reduce ex-combatants satisfaction with DDR (Phayal, Khadka, and Thyne 2015). While a peaceful post-conflict environment is highly desirable, full disarmament of former warring factions is not a realistic objective in post-conflict settings, nor does peace necessarily depend on disarmament (Giustozzi, 2012). Reintegration without disarmament or disbandment works through a state monopoly of violence, by way of Security Sector Reform (SSR), but does not create parallel non-state entities responsible for disarming ex-combatants.

A full or partial disarmament does not necessarily lead to successful reintegration and an environment of peace. Instead, we need to ask how to create a safe environment, where ex-combatants and members of the community do not feel the need to use arms for self-defence. This imperative sometimes comes with the assumption that a society exists akin to the *status quo ante* in which ex-combatants can just be reinserted. Had such a society existed, there would arguably have been no armed group to begin with: "Reintegration is not necessarily about the previous society, but about creating an atmosphere and/or process where disagreements and grievances are addressed without violence or the chronic threat of violence" (Shibuya 2012). Creating such an environment rests upon a meaningful social contract between the government and individuals, specifying expectations for ex-combatants and what the government offers in return.

Breaking the command and control structure of an armed group is the second common practice in DDR programs. Disbanding a rebel group is considered a necessary step towards reinserting individual fighters back into society. The process encompasses the second "D" of DDR, with reintegration deemed impossible unless individuals are free from the influence of their former co-combatants and commanders. However, recent research has shown that relations established during the war not only do not necessarily impede social integration, but might actually contribute to socio-economic reintegration. Non-context-specific recipes for reintegration, including the breaking up of armed organizations and the dispersal of ex-combatants (United Nations 2006), can sometimes do more harm than good (Daly 2016). As an example, reintegration efforts of paramilitary groups in Colombia show that remilitarization becomes likely when the rebel organization is broken up, when the distribution of power shifts, and when warring factions disagree on the extent of these shifts. The state and international actors should instead strategize differently when dealing with different types of armed actors.

The integrity of the peace agreement relies on the "informal arrangements" among the warring factions or between non-state actors and the state. To avoid disrupting the distribution of power, one should either break all structures equally by dispersing both local and non-local armed groups, or keep all structures intact by encouraging non-local groups to continue to reside where they fought. In the former case, military integration and security-sector reform (SSR) proves valuable, while making sure that all units are sufficiently disbanded and individual ex-combatants excluded from the security sector are taken care of. In the latter case, ex-combatants should be given occupational incentives to stay within their former warzones and to move their families to these zones. While both approaches confront challenges of their own, Daly (2016) suggests that both states and international actors pay especial attention and devote significant resources to localities in which non-local armed actors operated during the conflict to avoid implementing policies in such areas that would lead to the remilitarization of these factions.

Breaking up an armed group might be heralded by state authorities as marking the end of the war and a first successful step in the DDR process. Nevertheless, the underlying logic of this step is questionable in many conflict settings. President Djotodia of CAR officially "disbanded" the Seleka in September 2013, a move that was considered odd, as the Seleka were never "banded" as a cohesive group (Carayannis and Lombard 2015). The move also left the president with less bargaining power over the disbanded factions that had just lost the little existing power they previously held. The same is true of the Anti-Balaka – equally responsible for the surge of violence in CAR – they are a collection of self-defence groups partially mobilized by former President Bozizé (Carayannis and Lombard 2015, 7). There

is no evidence in the history of DDR that dismantling groups of such fragmentary nature contributes to their demobilization and eventual reintegration. Experience shows that dismantling armed groups before the start of any sensible DDR program leads to their further fractionalization and to the dispersion of members among criminal gangs or other insurgent groups.

A third assumption in reintegration efforts is that sending former combatants back to their home communities stops them from regrouping under the same hierarchy of command. This assumption has not proven very effective. First, as some armed groups recruit entire villages of men and women, it is unreasonable to think they would not stay as a group once they are all sent back to the same place where they were initially recruited. Second, even if the ex-combatants are from different localities, the collective war experience creates a bond among them, one that is at times stronger than their former connections to families and communities. Third, in fragile, post-war circumstances, security issues may compel former combatants to stay together in case violence resurges. Fourth, financial benefits through patronage networks led by former commanders, or simple economic collaboration, is another reason ex-combatants may choose to stay with their war comrades (de Vries and Wiegink 2011). Fifth, communities that ex-combatants are sent back to are sometimes not secure, with other armed groups aggravating the returnees' security dilemma. The first DDR program in the DRC, for instance, made demobilized combatants return to communities where renewed recruitment was often taking place. (SSRC 2015).

A fourth assumption in standardized practices of return is that the supply of short- and medium-term provisions of support through direct subsidies, basic skills training, and job creation, together with employment information and counselling, are an integral part of a successful reintegration program (Alden 2002). However, in most post-conflict economies, both the shortage of labour and the paucity of skills and education among the demobilized make rebel sustenance difficult to sustain even for short periods. McMullin (2013) argues that the minimalist position of "paying and scattering" defers the actual achievement of an integrated life, pinpointing the desired effects of reintegration but never articulating actions towards them. In addition, provisions of support for high-ranking officers have to differ from what is planned for the rank and file. It is mostly members from the upper echelons of the former military that lead criminal gangs operating in Mozambique today (Alden 2002). The structure of the reintegration program, treating all ex-combatants equally, could inadvertently lead to the criminalization of the post-conflict society.

Özerdem and Podder (2011) also point to the mistaken tendency to consider ex-combatants as a homogenous group, ignoring variations based on gender, age, disability, military ranking, and vocational skills. The DDR program in Burundi, despite its success in politically reintegrating the National Council for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD), saw the formation of the Imbonerakure youth wing, an armed militia. Members of Imbonerakure make up non-demobilized or partially demobilized members of CNDD-FDD, remobilized by mid-commanders who found no incentive in being reintegrated as carpenters or farmers – the local professions the DDR program offered ex-combatants who were not part of the SSR plan (Buchanan 2015; Nantulya 2015). Ignoring the political grievances and psychosocial needs of mid-ranking combatants led to their remobilization; combatants who did not join the military through SSR had to leave the rest of their CNDD-FDD members with whom they had spent the years of the civil war (1993-2005). Disbanding the group and leaving mid-ranking commanders to be dispersed was a mistake made in a DDR program that was otherwise very well designed.[6]

Promoting a culture of entitlement is reflective of ex-combatant preferences. For instance, the "socioeconomic reintegration package" offered to the Burundian rebel group, the National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD), a choice: (1) secondary school or university, (2) a one-year or shorter vocational training, or (3) nonfinancial start up materials to begin a new business. Of the 13,000 ex-combatants who received benefits by 2007, 96% had chosen the third option (Gilligan, Mvukiyehe, and Samii 2012). Ex-combatants do not immediately prefer being involved

[6] Interview with DDR officials at UN Headquarters in New York, June 2017

in state-generated economic activities. The start-up material provided for ex-combatants to start an independent business often included goods to sell in a small shop, partial payments for a moto-taxi, or agricultural assets.

A fifth assumption in standardized reintegration practices is that one country's DDR program can be used as a template for another. In DRC, the National Disarmament and Reinsertion Commission (*Commission nationale de désarmement et réinsertion,* CONADER) relied on the DDR program in Sierra Leone for its strategy in the DRC, ignoring home-grown expertise, economic opportunities, or the different local climate (Vogel and Musamba 2016; SSRC 2015). CONADER ran the first DDR program in the Congo, financed mainly by the World Bank. The DDR program mainly consisted of reinsertion rather than reintegration, thereby ignoring the social and security conditions of the DRC. The demobilized received goats, diesel grinding mills, or bicycles as part of reinsertion provisions in regions where the condition of roads prohibits cycling, no grinding mill spare parts were available, and stealing domestic animals was commonplace (Vogel and Musamba 2016).

The processes of DDR, in particular the successful reintegration of non-state armed forces into the state security apparatus, is often an essential part of a national Security Sector Reform (SSR) plan, and is often prescribed in new DDR programs. The SSR process in Zimbabwe (in the postcolonial transition from then Rhodesia) is generally considered a success story (Ginifer 1995). This became an early template for other demobilization and reintegration programs. However, integrating armed forces into the national military has unpredictable outcomes and cannot be a template solution for every context. As Mark Knight (2009) argues about SSR strategies, "There exist as many approaches and solutions as there are contexts in which they have been attempted." The DDR program in Cote d'Ivoire is an example of an SSR process that began with integrating armed groups into the national army without considering the exigencies of the context. Between 2012 and 2015, 40,000 of the 70,000 ex-combatants were integrated into the new National Armed Forces, making the army significantly larger than required by the security situation or that could be sustained (Naik 2017). Paying the soldiers drained the government's resources, and led to army mutinies well into 2017.

Applying DDR templates from one context to another not only results in unforeseen outcomes, but also raises questions about the DDR program as a whole. In such cases, the problem with judging the success or failure of a program is more than a lack of time series data. It is definitional.[7] While the DDR program in Cote d'Ivoire successfully demobilized thousands of ex-combatants by integrating them in the national army, it failed to establish long-term peace. The same can be said about the "mixage" and "brassage" efforts to integrate entire armed groups with command structures intact, into the national army in DRC. Reintegration programs need to define whether the goal is to support the national economy, create employment for ex-combatants, build a national army, or to engage the government with former armed groups. The DDR Section of DPKO at UN Headquarters in New York has been urging DDR programmers to define project goals, not only in terms of economic opportunities for ex-combatants, but in facilitating dialogue between the government and ex-combatants while also involving host communities.[8]

Takeaways: Some of the assumptions enshrined in standardized reintegration programs—such as the need to disperse former combatants or interest in vocational training—are flawed. Reintegration does not necessarily proceed from full disarmament, just as breaking up armed groups does not ensure that they do not remilitarize. Assuming that all ex-combatants have the same needs and incentives does not result in successful reintegration practices, just as sending ex-combatants "home" is not always a viable option. Moreover, DDR templates are not transferrable from one case to another. Both states and international actors need to pay particular attention and devote significant resources to localities in which non-local armed actors operated during the conflict to avoid implementing policies in these areas that

[7] I am grateful to Prof. Thomas G. Weiss for bringing this point to my attention.
[8] Interview with DDR officials at UN Headquarters in New York, June 2017.

would lead to their remilitarization. Finally, the goals of DDR programs need to be better and more narrowly defined.

The Impact of Return on Local Governance Structures

The Great Lakes Region is marked by economic underdevelopment, a factor that fuels and sustains conflicts, prompting scholars to call for a change in the DDR programs towards "transformative reintegration." Programs should attempt to remedy underlying grievances and act as a catalyst for social change, rebuild social capital, and jump start the political economy of peace (Jennings 2008: 332). Put concretely, such a transformation requires reintegration to be viewed as a developmental process, embracive of labour-intensive approaches, and requires an acknowledgement of ex-combatants as contributors to reconstruction and as potential agents of peace. Employment plays a significant part in DDR programs. Young, unemployed men are considered the best candidates for recruitment into armed groups (ILO 2010). In addition, jobs are claimed to compensate for the loss of identity and status associated with the dissolution of armed forces (World Bank 2012). In practice, however, the steps taken by DDR programs usually do not end with a reintegrated batch of employed ex-combatants.

As discussed earlier, economic reintegration is typically not a good predictor of political or social reintegration (Humphreys and Weinstein 2007). Gilligan, Mvukiyehe, and Samii (2012) also find no "downstream impact" in the case of 371 ex-combatants who took part in Burundi's Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP). The authors gauge ex-combatant disposition by asking them three questions: whether they preferred life as a civilian, if they were satisfied with the peace accords, and whether Burundians should change the government. Programmatic economic impacts do not contribute to political reintegration. Although the reintegration program in Burundi produced a significant boost to the income and livelihood prospects of CNDD-FDD ex-combatants, it did not induce a more positive disposition toward the political order or the laws and norms governing civilian society. Although this research has the weaknesses associated with any one-case study, the observations open the door for an important conclusion. If political reintegration does not trickle down from economic reintegration, DDR programs should devise separate programs to address the socio-political exclusion of ex-combatants in their community or the nation. As mentioned in the introduction, the behavioural transformation of ex-combatants involves ending the use of violent means and requires ex-combatants to get involved in social, political, and economic activities sanctioned by the community.

The social aspect of reintegration involves re-establishing family and community ties, a factor that plays a significant role in the success of reintegration, offering low-cost reintegration for ex-combatants while addressing community grievances (Kingma 2000). Unlike economic reintegration, however, there exists no agreement on what social reintegration really implies and how a DDR program's success or failure can be identified in that regard. Kaplan and Nussio (2015) argue that, instead of using perceived acceptance by the community as an indicator, social reintegration be understood as a level of community participation. Social participation is an especially important form of reintegration in post-conflict settings where opportunities to participate in national political life is scarce: "Participation can help ex-combatants feel socially fulfilled and accepted by their communities and can reduce their need to maintain social connections to their former armed group networks and bosses" (Kaplan and Nussio 2015, 2).

Thus, instead of delinking ex-combatants from their former comrades, a better approach to social reintegration would be to involve them in community affairs to the extent that they would not have to rely on their former networks for social fulfilment. The "absorptive capacity" of a community to accept ex-combatants depends on the openings and opportunities they provide the general population for participation (de Vries and Wiegink 2011). Well-organized communities can also mitigate an ex-combatants' security dilemma in the face of threat from other remaining armed groups (Kaplan 2010). Increasing the rate of social participation in communities substantially depends on community

characteristics: well-organized communities with strong social ties provide opportunities for ex-combatant contact and participation, reducing their need to rely on their wartime networks. Thus, improving the "social vibrancy" of communities in post-conflict societies not only benefits communities, but also contributes to ex-combatant reintegration.

The DRC's current DDR III plan, learning from the two previous national DDR programs, has designed a strong community-centred reintegration plan. The program has matched each ex-combatant with a member of the community for peer-to-peer reintegration support. Thus, 12,500 ex-combatants and 12,500 community members are supposed to benefit from the reintegration program. By providing a primary space within the community, the plan aims to facilitate social reintegration while creating employment opportunities for ex-combatants. Working with a community member is a small step towards reducing the ex-combatant stigma while also helping to prepare the community for their reception. The community member is thus both a facilitator and a beneficiary. The cooperation between the two individuals always has financial incentives for both. The reintegration program aims to provide training or equipment for the ex-combatant to either join an already existing line of work that the community member is engaged in, or for both to start a new profession together. For example, the reintegration program provides fishing equipment to an ex-combatant who, in turn, joins the fishing practice of a community member.[9] The national DDR plan has stalled, however, due to the absence of political will to fully implement it.

Next to economic and social reintegration, political reintegration makes for the third pillar of reintegration efforts. Boutros-Ghali (1992, 16) considered "promoting formal and informal processes of political participation" among both returnees and *remainees* one of the key activities of peacebuilding. At their broadest, "DDR programs aim to change the way ex-combatants and civilians view governance processes" (Schulhofer-Wohl and Sambanis 2010, 16). Among other activities mentioned in the 1992 Secretary-General's report are disarming the previously warring parties, and the destruction of their weapons, both of which have overshadowed the other components of peacebuilding. Conversion of rebel groups into political parties is the main macro-level step taken towards promoting political participation. Forming veteran associations is another step towards creating opportunities for ex-combatants to engage with the political system (Colletta and Muggah 2009). On the micro level, DDR programs foster stability by stimulating passive participation: encouraging ex-combatants to take part in municipal and national elections and thereby subjecting themselves to procedural justice. Most reintegration programs, for lack of will and/or resources, have not gone further than promote passive participation.

To encourage active participation in post-conflict governance structures, Schulhofer-Wohl and Sambanis (2010) suggest including ex-combatants and communities in the policymaking process. Such inclusion increases the transparency of policy selection and implementation mechanisms, addresses the political grievances that led to the war, and gives legitimacy to the post-war political order. A first step would be to stop conflating disparate fighting forces under the umbrella term "ex-combatant" (McMullin 2013, 240). Considering all ex-combatants as equally threatening to post-conflict peace and ignoring the political and armed groups for which they fought denies them political agency. Annan et al. (2011), in a study of 228 LRA ex-combatants in Uganda, find little relationship between war experiences and aggressive behaviour during reintegration. The study also suggests that former abductees by the LRA have strong incentive not to behave aggressively since it is associated with "bush behavior" and can be stigmatizing (Annan et al. 2011, 901).

Second, DDR practitioners often see ex-combatants as beneficiaries only, speaking for and on their behalf. This leaves ex-combatants to resort to organized protest or to threatening violence to demand power. In other cases, the long-lasting presence of NGOs during and after conflict, in northern Uganda for instance, leads to the population becoming increasingly dependent on them, with community

[9] Interview with DDR officials at UN Headquarters in New York, June 2017.

preferences unacknowledged in defining the priorities of interventions. This has been known to have a victimizing effect and to be harmful to processes of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction (Dolan 2013). McMullin (2013, 242) suggests that DDR programs be reoriented to conceive of ex-combatants as "subjects" and not merely as "objects" of reintegration. Providing forums for citizens and local leaders to voice their opinions on post-conflict policies – and making sure policymakers hear their opinions – is a better practice. "Some ex-combatants might be dissatisfied with the benefits awarded to them during DDR, but if they conclude that the process was procedurally fair, they may be induced to view the government as legitimate and refrain from agitating against it" (Schulhofer-Wohl and Sambanis 2010: 17). Ex-combatants and the affected communities have considerable expertise and skills that could be harnessed in any reintegration program (Muggah 2005b).

Takeaways: Reintegration on the economic level is typically not a good predictor of reintegration on a political or social dimension, nor do economic programmatic impacts contribute to political reintegration. Social participation is an especially important form of reintegration in post-conflict settings where opportunities to participate in national political life is scarce. Improving the "social vibrancy" of communities in post-conflict societies not only benefits communities, but also contributes to ex-combatant reintegration. Political reintegration can begin by encouraging active participation in post-conflict governance structures and by including ex-combatants and communities in the policymaking process. Such inclusion increases the transparency of policy selection and implementation mechanisms, addresses the political grievances that led to war, and gives legitimacy to the post-war political order.

DDR and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE): A Good Match?

The burgeoning literature on DDR partly corresponds to the constantly changing post-conflict environment, a prominent feature of which is the deployment of UN peacebuilding operations in countries grappling with violent extremism. UN peacekeepers could also soon be involved in Syria, Nigeria, Yemen, Libya, and Somalia, all states that have been engaged in protracted and internationalized civil wars involving violent extremist groups. Some donor countries (especially Saudi Arabia) have promoted programs that blend the experiences and practices of countering violent extremism (CVE) with DDR programs. The recommendation stems from the assumption that CVE and DDR share the overlapping goals of rehabilitating and reintegrating former fighters. Recent literature on disengaging violent extremist groups shows that disengagement from (extremist) violence is only possible with reintegration into a community; providing justice for victims through reconciliation and transitional justice does not contradict providing former extremists with incentives for reintegration (Bjørgo and Horgan 2009; Cronin 2009; Altier 2014; Barelle 2015). Since CVE efforts target both fighters and communities in preventing and countering violent extremism, can they inform DDR programs deployed in places where there is no peace to keep? Does the UN need a next generation of DDR programs in managing conflicts with violent extremist actors (Fink 2015)?

Responding to the emerging needs of the future, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon established a High-Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations. The 16-member panel's report (2015) made clear that UN peace operations are not suitable for engaging in military counter-terrorism operations since they lack the necessary equipment, intelligence, logistics, capabilities, and military preparation for such operations. When missions are deployed with mandates to protect civilians, but without the requisite resources, capabilities, and political support, not only are they doomed to fail, but they also make peacekeepers a party to the conflict (Karlsrud and Gjelsvik 2017). Including CVE in DDR programs poses a major obstacle: while CVE is aimed at the individual or at small groups, the second targets larger organized groups whose leaders have agreed to participate in the peace process (Fink 2015). This distinction does not apply to all DDR cases. As shown above, the DDR program in CAR was implemented despite the lack of a peace process and credible leadership engagement.

Another important distinction between CVE and DDR is the role of the state. A recent report published by the UN University Centre for Policy Research offers examples of CVE efforts that have a common aim with reintegration programs (Cockayne and O'Neil, 2015). Examples of CVE efforts in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Norway, Germany, Sweden, India, Tajikistan, and Pakistan range from employment programs, sports and arts, spiritual and religious guidance, psychosocial support, and strategic communication (Fink 2015). The cases mentioned are all state initiatives, where a strong state, either in peacetime or in a post-conflict phase, supports families in identifying early signs of radicalization or extends support to both the victims and the perpetrators of terrorism. States, international organizations, and NGOs play varying functions in dealing with non-state armed actors in peacebuilding operations (Hofmann and Schneckener 2011). While states are more likely to be able to use coercive measures to influence the behaviour of armed actors, international organizations use their political leverage in engaging with non-state actors. The UN has the power to punish (through economic sanctions or through naming and shaming) or to reward non-state actors in hopes of altering their behaviour (which usually includes pressure to engage with the government in a dialogue towards peace). The reward comes in the form of development aid, capacity building, DDR programs, and security sector reform. (Hofmann and Schneckener 2011). After assessing the literature, we observe that reintegration programs--with their economic incentives and the promise to ex-combatants of a better future as civilians—should be considered a reward for *already* de-radicalized combatants of a violent extremist group, not a starting point for de-radicalization.

CVE and DDR also face "qualitatively different" challenges since jihadist fighters are waging an "ideological battle that is at odds with the systems and values enshrined in the UN Charter…. Many do not recognize the legitimacy or authority of the state and the international system and do not consider international organisations to be credible interlocutors" (Fink 2015, 74). The distinction between ideological and non-ideological battles is a false distinction. The end of the Cold War (and the drop in support for proxy groups propagating either a capitalist or communist ideology), prompted a debate among civil war scholars about whether we were seeing the move away from ideological wars as a move from "old" to "new" wars (Kaldor 1999; Kalyvas 2001; Elshtain 2001; Roberts 2010; Kalyvas 2015). Regardless of the "newness" of these wars, the return to describing civil conflicts as "ideological" with the emergence of Islamist groups, is regrettable. It risks setting back the study of civil conflicts by a decade, the time taken by scholars to find out the underlying causes and drivers of political violence, in place of short-handily branding them as "ideological."

It also challenges post-conflict peace and transitional justice efforts. Macdonald and Porter (2016) lament the so-called holistic approach at transitional justice and call for consideration of local conceptions of crime, practices of justice in context, and how best to engage them. The need for restoration of social harmony after conflict is indifferent to whether the war was waged on ideological terms: "A misunderstanding (wilful or otherwise) of these dynamics creates a huge disjuncture between an imagined 'local', artificially constructed in service of a broader transitional justice vision, and lived realities in which the 'local' is a complex, often turbulent terrain of social, political and economic ideas and activity" (Macdonald and Porter 2016, 717). Social communal harmony does not preclude but nearly always trumps the concurrent belief that wrongdoing deserves to be punished (Porter 2012). Presenting conflicts as ideological, and proceeding to punish ex-combatants for committing terror against their peoples and the rest of the world, evokes a retributive approach to justice, penalizing ex-combatants for violating the law. Such approaches to justice have long been rejected in DDR programs, which combine the retributive and restorative approaches to justice, aiming at the rehabilitation of the perpetrator and their potential restoration in the society.

Whether a group is called an insurgency, a terrorist group, or a rebel organization affects the policies devised to deal with it and its members in peacebuilding efforts. Kalyvas (2015) argues that the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) does not represent a radically new phenomenon and should thus be treated as any revolutionary group, which aims to fundamentally transform the social and political

relations of a state. The revolutionary ideology gives ISIS an organizational advantage relative to non-revolutionary groups. Not only does it make it able to sustain irregular, guerrilla wars against a much stronger state actor, it provides a structure of governance (public goods, order, policing, etc.) much welcomed by local populations living in anarchic spaces. Unlike terrorist groups, revolutionary organizations that govern territory are keen to mobilize and indoctrinate the population to generate additional supporters and fighters. This categorization allows us to benefit from comparative studies of ISIS and other (Maoist, Marxist, etc.) revolutionary groups.

Branding insurgent groups with terrorist tactics as terrorist organizations is not exclusive to the Middle East. The Anti-Balaka are known as an extremist group responsible for ethnic/religious cleansing acts in CAR. Scholars familiar with the origins of the conflict in the small central African nation, however, agree that the underlying causes of the recent cycle of violence in CAR are political, not religious. The members of the group describe their war as an autochthony movement, "standing up for the 'true' population of CAR" against mistreatment by foreigners (Carayanis and Lombard 2015, 8). The LRA in Uganda has also been portrayed in the media as an irrational religious group engaged in senseless violence. Studying the rebel group closely, however, shows that it is a political and rational organization, despite its cruel acts (Blattman and Annan 2008). Branding the LRA a terrorist group made it morally and politically unacceptable to engage them through peacebuilding activities (Omach 2016). The Ugandan government has also framed the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) as a terrorist group posing an existential threat to Uganda. This frame has served multiple objectives, justifying the invasion of the DRC, gaining a place in the US-led war on terror, and rationalizing repression inside Uganda (Titeca and Fahey 2016). In 2005, The International Court of Justice rejected Uganda's claim that ADF's actions posed a national security threat proportionate to the series of trans-border attacks into the DRC. In 2013, 2014, and 2015, the UN Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo also found no evidence of links between the ADF and al-Shabaab or al-Qaeda, a claim consistently made by the Ugandan authorities (Titeca and Fahey 2016). The Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo also reported in 2016 that they have found no evidence of ADF being linked with foreign terrorist groups, despite the fact that "Many individuals, including some within the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, still maintain that ADF has links with foreign terrorist groups and that it is massacring civilians as part of its new strategy… it has become clear that FARDC (Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo) officers were involved in recruiting and supplying armed groups involved in the killings" (UN Security Council, S/2016/466, para 212).

Framing or branding a rebel group a terrorist organization is especially problematic for peacebuilding operations: it reduces opportunities for engagement with the group and its members. Seeing the opponents of a government as an insurgent group, instead of a terrorist one, highlights the need to re-establish governmental credibility and gain the population's hearts and minds, while aiming at defeating the group with military means (Moghadam, Berger, and Beliakova 2014). Peacebuilding efforts should address the social and political grievances upon which the insurgents' political agenda is based, instead of focusing on the enemy-centred narratives of terrorists attacking innocents. Changing the focus from terrorist to insurgent also affects how peacebuilding programs view individual members of a demobilized rebel group. Focusing on the nexus between counter terrorism and peacebuilding, Fink (2015) recommends developing a Risk Assessment and Screening Tool to screen for violent extremist offenders in DDR settings, drawing on screening tools developed for CVE and terrorist rehabilitation purposes. Including this measure in reintegration programs, however, is problematic. If any lessons are learned from all the DDR missions and "lessons learned" publications, it is that further stigmatizing ex-combatants impedes their reintegration into the community. That some individuals require further assistance in the reintegration process is not new to the DDR literature. Aspects of an individual's conflict experience exerts powerful effects on their acceptance by the community (Humphreys and Weinstein 2007). Gaining acceptance is substantially hindered if an individual had been fighting in an abusive unit.

Targeting ex-combatants as a group is counter-productive, primarily because it works against

reintegration efforts to remove the stigma of former fighters within the community and does not meet the needs of host communities. In a similar vein, Macdonald (2017) argues that contemporary transitional justice approaches have failed to engage with the everyday needs of people across diverse and heterogeneous post-conflict contexts. As an alternative, Colletta, Kostner and Wiederhofer (1996) suggest that broad-based, inclusive support in the shape of educational and economic programs be directed to community members based on merit and need. For instance, targeting programs to all war-affected youth based on well-identified needs rather than combatant status may be more effective and less stigmatizing. The markers for vulnerability include serious injuries, illiteracy, low levels of education (i.e. less than three years), persistent unemployment, estrangement from families, severe symptoms of psychological distress, and conflicts with community members (Annan et al. 2006).

As Robert Muggah (2005) points out, DDR is not a "magic bullet"; the realization of its potential depends on a sound awareness of its limitations. In Somalia, for instance, the lack of a formal peace agreement with al-Shabaab stalled the implementation of a full-fledged DDR program. Meanwhile, however, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the government have held about 2,000 disengaged fighters of al-Shabaab. These were either captured in combat, had voluntarily surrendered, or were willing to surrender (Williams 2013). In 2012, the Somali government asked for $19 million to rehabilitate and reintegrate the ex-combatants. The call for merging DDR programs with those of CVE in the case of Somalia, appears to be a desperate call for funnelling DDR resources and finances into a process that does not meet the criteria for DDR.

In the concluding chapter to one of the only book-long works devoted to analysing the nexus between DDR and CVE, Cockayne and O'Neil (2015: 144) argue that no new generation of DDR is required at this point. Rather, existing DDR tools and practices should be integrated with the tools of CVE to develop a "practice framework for 'Demobilization and Disengagement from Violent Extremism', DDVE." The authors' argument relies on field research laid out in the same volume that addresses DDR programs dealing with detention issues amongst radicalized combatants and terrorist groups (Oswald 2015). Felbab-Brown's (2015) field research in Somalia suggests that about 40% of those in the DDR facility in Baidoa are not voluntary participants. Thus, DDR programs are already dealing with non-voluntary participants, with DDR facilities essentially operating as a de facto detention centre.

DDR programs had been dealing with violent extremism before the phenomenon came to be called as such. The volatile, non-permissive environments in which DDR programs operate often require flexibility in programing as well as flexibility, innovation, and a constant readjustment in implementation and assessment (Seethaler 2016). Asking to reinvent the wheel of DDR undermines the efforts made to address violent extremism in the past decade. Reintegration programs in Mali and Somalia have focused on encouraging defection, devising exit strategies for members of extremist groups, and facilitating life outside the group to curb further recruitment.[10]

Reintegration programs work on the basis of a voluntary decision by ex-combatants to restart life as civilians or join the national army. In consciously deciding to take part in the reintegration program, the individual ex-combatant sees something beyond the reinsertion kit and the short-term training. In Uganda, reintegration was offered to the LRA prior to disarmament as an incentive to encourage participation in the Juba negotiations of 2006 (Muggah and Baaré 2009). Taking away the voluntary aspect, and introducing involuntary CVE elements to reintegration programs, disrupts many fundamental elements for reintegration program planning and design. In addition, as was mentioned above, applying one DDR template to all conflicts might end with disastrous or unsatisfactory results. If future DDR programs in Libya, Yemen, or Syria needs to have a CVE element, they will have to be planned and designed according to the particularities of the post-conflict setting in each of these countries. DDR programs have been able to adapt to new challenges in the past years. This too is a new challenge. However, it is not a problem whose solution can be found by formulating a universally

[10] Interview with DDR officials at UN Headquarters in New York, June 2017.

applicable paradigm.[11]

Takeaways: As early as 2007, DDR was part of "complex" and "multidimensional" UN peacekeeping operations in Burundi, the Ivory Coast, the DRC, Haiti, Liberia, and Sudan, and worked in tandem with humanitarian assistance, security sector reform, democratization, human rights, and rule of law programs (Porto, Alden, and Parsons 2007, 7). DDR can work in tandem with CVE without one overlapping the other, but they are separate processes. DDR is a voluntary process. Taking away the voluntary aspect and introducing involuntary CVE elements to reintegration programs risks disrupting the process of reintegration and return. Peacekeeping operations should not be eager to provide solutions for problems that are either political or are part of long-term development challenges (Karlsrud 2015). CVE is better done either by states or by coalitions of willing states, rather than multilateral organizations.

Conclusion

Setting clear objectives for DDR programs and demonstrating success in achieving them is vital in ensuring their relevance in contemporary post-conflict situations. Future evaluation and planning of reintegration programs should focus on asking four main questions: Does the program prevent war recurrence and strengthen peace? Does it reduce crime and violence? Does it increase civic and political participation? Does it deal with war trauma and social reintegration? Most analyses of DDR programs, however, focus only on the economic aspect of reintegration. This is perhaps because the World Bank has been involved in DDR missions since early on, and due to ease of reporting on economic indicators. It is important for DDR programs to strike a balance between what the government and communities aim at getting through the program, especially at times when the two clash.[12] DDR programs should include a political contract with the state and a social contract with the population, without each of which we cannot hope to get close to realizing the aims of DDR processes.

[11] Interview with DDR officials at UN Headquarters in New York, June 2017.
[12] Interview with DDR officials at UN Headquarters in New York, June 2017.

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